Run-ons and the proper deployment of the semicolon

**Rule of thumb**  In English punctuation, a comma alone does not suffice to join two sentences to form a sentence.

(1) Shaq is tall, he towers over me.  = RUN-ON!
(2) Shaq is tall  = A SENTENCE
(3) He towers over me  = A SENTENCE

**A simple test**  Try to replace the comma with a period. If the result sounds like two sentences, then the comma is misplaced.

**What to do**

(4) Replace the comma with a period.
    Shaq is tall. He towers over me.

(5) Replace the comma with a semicolon. (This is best done only if the two sentences on either side of the semicolon play roughly the same role in your argument.)
    Shaq is tall; he towers over me.

(6) Add a coordinating element (this can add to the meaning, so be careful).
    a. Shaq is tall, and he towers over me.
    b. Shaq is tall, but he towers over me.
    c. Shaq is tall, or he towers over me.

**An exception**  If you are joining three or more sentences, then a comma can connect two of them, as long as the last two are connected with a coordinating word.

(7) Shaq is tall, he towers over me, he has big feet.  = RUN-ON!

(8) Shaq is tall, he towers over me, \{ and \\
    or \\
    but \\
    so \\
    : \} he has big feet.  = A SENTENCE
Possessive apostrophes with pronouns

The general generalization  No possessive apostrophes appear in pronouns (yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs,…). This is trickiest with its.

(9)  I like my book because its cover is orange.

(10)  It’s cloudy today.

If you forget the rule  Just remember this: any apostrophe in a pronoun must be expandable into a pronoun plus a verb. Thus, it’s must be expandable to it is.

(11)  *I like my book because it is cover is orange.

(12)  It is cloudy today.

No one would call (11) a grammatical sentence.

How to determine which pronoun you need

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<tr>
<th>Nominative</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
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Coordination  Native speakers tend to encounter difficulties in coordination. For most speakers, all of the following sound acceptable, but only the boldfaced ones are acceptable in formal writing.

(13)  Ed is trying to recruit you and I.

(14)  Ed is trying to recruit you and me.

(15)  She and him play racketball.

(16)  She and he play racketball.
A handy trick  Decompose the coordination into two separate sentences. If both sound fine, then your coordination is fine. (You might have to fiddle with the verb form.)

(17)  Ed is trying to recruit you.  *Ed is trying to recruit I.
(18)  Ed is trying to recruit you.  Ed is trying to recruit me.
(19)  She plays racketball.  *Him plays racketball.
(20)  She plays racketball.  He plays racketball.

Are the golf balls *among or between my fingers?*